

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 SAJ-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 ACDA-19

COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 /154 W

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P R 041512Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0939

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK, EI

SUBJECT:COMMONS DEBATE ON NORTHERN IRELAND

REF: LONDON 6715

SUMMARY: THOUGH NO FULL ASSESSMENT CAN YET BE MADE OF
COMMONS DEBATE ON NORTHERN IRELAND, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY TO
LEAD TO ANY EARLY AND DRAMATIC REVERSAL OF UK POLICY OR
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TO A MAJOR SPLIT IN CONSERVATIVE OR LABOR PARTIES OVER

THIS ISSUE. NEVERTHELESS, MP'S FROM ALL PARTIES ARE NOW SAYING PUBLICLY WHAT ONLY A FEW WERE SAYING PRIOR TO LAST WEEK'S EVENTS IN NI. DEBATE HAS SHOWED THAT WHATEVER GOVERNMENT POLICY EMERGES IN PERIOD AHEAD, BRITISH COMMITMENT TO NI IS NOT OPEN-ENDED. END SUMMARY.

1. TWO-DAY EMERGENCY DEBATE ON NI OPENED IN COMMONS JUNE 3 WITH STATEMENT BY NI SECRETARY REES THAT EVERYONE CONCERNED WITH NI MUST USE BREATHING SPACE PROVIDED BY FOUR-MONTH PERIOD OF DIRECT RULE TO CONSIDER HOW TO PROCEED. GOVERNMENT WOULD SEARCH FOR A WAY FORWARD, BUT OTHERS (READ NI EXTREMISTS) WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THEIR REAPPRAISALS TOO. IN INTERIM, PROVISIONS OF NI CONSTITUTION ACT WOULD ENABLE GOVERNMENT TO BE CARRIED ON WITHOUT DAMAGING BASIC STRUCTURE OF ACT ITSELF. TO A PACKED HOUSE, REES MADE IT CLEAR THAT GOVERNMENT WAS FIRMLY OPPOSED TO OFTEN EXPRESSED "POPULIST" VIEW THAT BRITAIN SHOULD PULL OUT OF NI QUICKLY, LEAVING TWO COMMUNITIES THERE TO FIGHT IT OUT. HE ALSO SAID THAT GOVERNMENT WAS FIRMLY AGAINST INTEGRATION OF NI WITH REST OF UK. REES THEN REVIEWED RECENT NI DEVELOPMENTS, PAID TRIBUTE TO COURAGE OF PARTICIPANTS IN POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE, NOTED COST TO BRITISH PEOPLE OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO NI IN RECENT YEARS AND OBSERVED THAT A NEW FORM OF PROTESTANT NATIONALISM HAD BEEN EMERGING IN NI. "UNIONISM CLEARLY NO LONGER MEANT WHAT IT USED TO."

2. OPPOSITION NI SPOKESMAN PYM SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT LINE AGAINST BELIEF THAT NI SOLUTIONS WERE TO BE FOUND IN TROOP WITHDRAWAL OR INTEGRATION WITH UK. THOUGH AT TIMES CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF UWC STRIKE, BASIC THRUST OF PYM'S COMMONS SPEECH WAS TO EMPHASIZE CONSERVATIVE PARTY SUPPORT FOR A CONTINUED BIPARTISAN POLICY IN NI. PYM STRESSED THAT WHATEVER POLICY WAS DEVELOPED, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE QUICKLY AND WOULD REQUIRE SUPPORT OF MAJORITY IN NI. HE SAID CONSERVATIVE PARTY HAD ALWAYS SUPPORTED UNITY OF UK AND WOULD REGRET ANY MOVE TO SEVER HISTORIC LINK BETWEEN ITS PEOPLES. HE EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT INTEGRATION OF NI INTO THE UK WAS IN ACCORD WITH WISHES OF EITHER BRITISH OR NI PEOPLE. HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THOUGHT ANY PLAN FOR FEDERATION WITH A SEMI-INDEPENDENT
ULSTER COULD LEAD TO BREAKUP OF UK.

3. IN MANY SPEECHES WHICH FOLLOWED IT BECAME CLEAR THAT
WHATEVER THE FRONT BENCHES OF THE TWO PARTIES MIGHT BE
THINKING, EVENTS OF PAST WEEK AND COLLAPSE OF EXECUTIVE
HAVE CHANGED WAY IN WHICH BRITISH MP'S VIEW ULSTER SITUA-
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TION. MANY MP'S SPOKE OF POSSIBILITY OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL THOUGH MOST DID NOT ADVOCATE SUCH A POLICY NOW AND URGED ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT GETTING SOME KIND OF POWER-SHARING ADMINISTRATION IN NI GOING.

4. TO DISCOMFORT OF TORY FRONT BENCH, FORMER HOME SECRETARY MAUDLING, WHO HAD BEEN FIRST MINISTER TO PUT FORWARD CONCEPT OF POWER-SHARING, SAID THAT THERE CAME A TIME WHEN COMMONS MUST CONSIDER ANY POSSIBILITY TO MEET NI PROBLEM, HOWEVER REPUGNANT. WHILE HE DID NOT ADVOCATE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH FORCES IF CONSEQUENCES WERE TO BE BLOODSHED AND CIVIL WAR, MAUDLING SAID HE WAS COMING TO FEEL THAT TIME HAD ARRIVED FOR TELLING PEOPLE OF NI THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT WANTED TO WITHDRAW BRITISH FORCES AND TO SEE NORTHERN IRISH WORK OUT THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS.

5. COMMENT: COMMONS DEBATE HAD BEEN PRECEDED BY MEETINGS OF ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DESPITE PRESS REPORTS OF WIDE RIFTS AMONG MP'S ABOUT HOW TO PROCEED, PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY MEETING WENT OFF SMOOTHLY AND WITH AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE FULL SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY. SIMILARLY, TORY BACKBENCHERS' MEETING AGREED TO CONTINUE SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT AND BIPARTISAN APPROACH TO NI. OF THREE MAJOR PARTIES, LIBERALS ARE APPARENTLY HAVING MOST DIFFICULT TIME IN REACHING AGREEMENT. PRESS YESTERDAY SAID THAT PARTY CHIEF WHIP DAVID STEEL AND SEVERAL OTHER LIBERAL MP'S ARE CONVINCED THAT TIME HAD COME WHEN BRITISH HAD TO WITHDRAW FORCES FROM NI. PARTY LEADER JEREMY THORPE IS THOUGHT TO OPPOSE SUCH ACTION AND IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A FORMAL STATEMENT OF LIBERAL PARTY POLICY IN COMMONS DEBATE TODAY.

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